MEN OF LETTERS OF THE BRITISH ISLES

THEODORE SPICER-SIMSON
AND STUART P. SHERMAN

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MEN OF LETTERS

Men of Letters

OF THE BRITISH ISLES

PORTRAIT MEDALLIONS FROM THE LIFE
BY THEODORE SPICER-SIMSON
WITH CRITICAL ESSAYS BY
STUART P. SHERMAN
AND A PREFACE
BY G. F. HILL

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PREFACE

After years of neglect, interest in the art of the small portrait relief known as the medal seems to be reawakening. Its immense possibilities as a medium for the expression of personality are once more being recognized by others than artists. To be allowed to say something on the subject in direct association with the work of so distinguished an exponent of the art as the author of the portraits published in this volume is no small privilege for one who has worked hard and long, however clumsily, with his pen towards the same end.

There are two types of medal, one "cast" from a wax model, the other "struck" in a press from dies. In spite of the greater popularity of its "struck" rival, the "cast" medal has fortunately never been disestablished from the favour of discerning men. The tradition which was kept alive, even through the nineteenth century, by a few masters, such as Alphonse Legros, is surely not dead. It may be that one feature, originally characteristic of the medal, has gone beyond recall. Thus Legros, for instance, frankly made no attempt at designing reverses, being content to produce portrait plaques. We may guess that he felt that the day of allegorical designs was over; but to him, as a painter, the low relief on a small scale, with its miraculous opportunities for rendering the play of light and shade on a countenance, made a strong appeal. Consciously or unconsciously it is as his heir that the maker of the portraits with which we are here concerned seems to me to claim consideration.

Posterity will be able to decide better than ourselves, who are too near to the modern medallist's work to see it in true perspective, how permanent a place it will take in the story of the arts. Meanwhile we can only judge whether the principles, the observation of which entitles

such small cast reliefs to rank as fine art, are discernible in him; whether, in fact, he has risen above what Calvert called "the mean dexterity of practice."

Let us remember, to begin with, that no illustration in two dimensions, by any photographic process, can do justice to reliefs of this kind. Such illustrations can but represent the object in a single light. But what distinguishes such works from reliefs on a larger scale is precisely the possibility of holding them in the hand and turning them about into different lights. Anything that is too heavy for that purpose, too large for the span of a man's hand, may as well be hung on a wall and regarded as sculpture. The medallist, accordingly, has to handle his subject in such a way that it will stand illumination from any quarter, even from below. His preliminary studies must be taken from more than one pose; he is faced with the difficult task of recording in low relief the subtly varying expressions of a face seen in various lights. The sculptor working on a larger scale might be well advised to stand up to the same problem, but it is seldom that he does so, for seldom is he likely to be put to so cruel a test.

A second problem which the medallist has to face he shares with every sculptor whose models are made for bronze casting. It is that he must, while working in the wax, be thinking all the time of the metal in which his model is to be rendered; he must conceive of his wax model, not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end, and not of the metal casting as a mere means of permanently preserving his work in wax. Otherwise his medal will look not like a piece of metal, but like a wax model that has been bronzed or silvered. That indeed is the appearance borne by too many of the medals which have been struck from dies prepared by the reducing machine from designs modelled by sculptors. They give no impression of solidity.

Other problems there are arising out of the fact that the medallic portrait can never be regarded as part of a decorative scheme. The relief must

bear just the right relation to the ground without any help from surroundings. A sculptured relief on a larger scale may be framed or otherwise set and hung so as to correct any fault in proportions; a medal must be absolutely independent. The placing of the bust in the circle may seem a simple enough matter; but the happiness with which a Pisanello achieves the feat is evidently the result of consummate judgement, like all arrangements in art that seem most simple. The relation of the bust itself to the head, in regard to both relief and amount of detail, is an extraordinarily difficult matter. Many of the Florentines slurred over the treatment of the bust altogether; the Mantuans lavished decoration on it; other medallists—I think they must have been sculptors by profession, and Francesco da Sangallo certainly was—represented the shoulders in very high relief, almost equivalent to the natural proportions. Nothing could be less suitable than this last form to the circular limits of the field, since the bust thus inevitably looks incomplete, the eye of the beholder being drawn downwards out of the design, to supply by imagination the rest of the body.

Finally—not to be wearisome in enumerating to the end the lions in the medallist's path—he has to master the art of lettering; an art in itself, both in the building up of the letters, the form of which can be exquisitely refined or unutterably common, and in the arrangement of the inscription as an integral part of the composition.

For all these things there are no rules, nor any models that may be slavishly copied. "En matière d'art, il est dangereux d'apprendre à faire comme les autres." The artist, as every one knows, must see his own visions and work out his own salvation, if he wishes his technique to become something more than mere craftsmanship; if he wishes to have style, in other words the power of giving expression in form to something which he alone has been able to discover in his subject. Then what he creates will be a new and strange combination of two personalities, that of his sitter

and that of himself as affected by his sitter. Half of this truth was seen by Samuel Butler when it occurred to him that "a great portrait is always more a portrait of the painter than of the painted." Let us say rather that it is compounded of two elements; not, like a chemical compound, resembling neither of its constituents, but a spiritual combination which by some miracle of sympathy both reveals and transcends them. "Likeness" in portraiture, therefore, is worthless if it is superficial, the mechanical rendering of the photographic plate. It takes two minds to make a portrait which shall reveal a personality. The sitter and his friend are usually interested only in the question whether the artist has "caught the likeness." They are pleased to recognize what they have known for years. The true critic will look for something more, or at any rate something else: for that which the artist alone has been able to discover and reveal.

The sum—or rather the greatest common measure—of such revelations, in the series of an artist's productions, gives the character of his achievement. That is something quite different from the æsthetic pleasure given by particular works of art. Those who say that the question whether a painting or a statue is by this or that artist matters nothing, so long as it gives pleasure, see but half the significance of the thing before them.

It is hardly my business, indeed it would be impertinent, to attempt to estimate the precise degree in which the portraits illustrated in this book come up to the standard which I have perhaps somewhat vaguely indicated. But it is permissible to say, what I know, that the artist has been conscious throughout of the problems which must be resolved if a medal is to be a work of art, and has thought out his own way of attacking them. To be conscious of so much brings him more than half way to a solution; and even if he should not always reach it, his work is none the less interesting for its revelation of a fine endeavour, and much more satisfactory than the achievement of a lower ideal.

Quite apart from the problems inherent in the nature of the medal as such, some few of which have been already indicated, the medallist is hampered by other difficulties of external origin. These centre in the fact that his work, more especially if it is reproduced by striking with dies in a press, has to suffer from the misplaced ingenuity of scientific inventors more than any other art which depends on mechanical processes for the multiplication of an original design. Since the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the medallists in Rome, and especially Benvenuto Cellini, first began to make what they fondly regarded as improvements in the methods of die-cutting and striking, so as to increase the power and quicken the output of the presses, the medal has steadily diverged farther from its original significance, moral and artistic. In its origin essentially and intimately associated with the personality of the subject represented, it has become more and more an advertisement. The intimacy of the relation evaporates when it is sought to make it public property in hundreds of examples. On the other hand, the advantages of an easily multiplied, small, portable and durable portrait over a painted picture are as those of a printed page or engraving over a manuscript or hand-drawing; and the possibilities of vulgarization are equal. The technique of die-engraving reached its highest development in the seventeenth century; the technique of striking and finishing, on the other hand, in the early part of the nineteenth century. Then came the final and crushing development, the invention of the reducing-machine. Since then the designer has made his models on a larger scale, nearly always without any knowledge of the craft of die-engraving, without any thought of the material in which his wax is to be reproduced, without any notion that the relations of planes and light and shade which are correct on a larger scale may be wrong when mathematically reduced to a smaller one, or that the sketchiness which may look well in wax or plaster is nothing but slovenly when reproduced in metal. Of recent years there has been a reaction in favour

of the old methods; but the harm has been done irreparably, for the old race of craftsmen with a knowledge of direct die-cutting is all but extinct, and the immense numbers in which official medals have to be produced make the intervention of the engineer a necessity.

The publication in a book of a series of medals may at first sight seem inconsistent with the objection already expressed to the indefinite multiplication of what should be a private and intimate record. Let me plead in explanation, if any be needed, that the illustrations are, for reasons already given, no more than indications of the real things; and reproduction in this form, being by its nature not in competition with the original, cannot have the effect of vulgarizing it. Rather must such a book, in so far as it enlists our interest, deepens our knowledge, and broadens the general appreciation of a difficult and worthy art, have a definite educative value.

GEORGE F. HILL

British Museum,
London

T·S·S
P·E·C
ARNOLD·BENNETT·A·D·MDCCCLXVII

ARNOLD BENNETT

A questionable candidate for immortality who will doubtless be requested to leave a large part of his literary baggage outside the door. But Arnold Bennett is the kind of man who gets what he goes after. He is infinitely canny. He is remorselessly efficient. Withal, he has a vein of genius which he works when, on shrewd calculation, he perceives that it will pay better than even his unrivalled efficiency. And so at the final literary assizes he will probably not only get in but will also get well up towards the front, wedge himself in between Dickens and Trollope, light a cigar and, with the Clayhanger trilogy in his lap, complacently await the last judgment.

With amusing malice his contemporary, the author of *Boon*, describes him as imperfectly developed, an "aborted" great man, who born a generation earlier would have been recognized as a Great Victorian—as it is, "no one will ever cherish his old hats and pipes." Now, that Mr. Bennett is not at heart a Victorian is proved by the fact that he does not care a rip whether any one cherishes his old hats and pipes so long as every one buys some part of the million or half million words which he appoints himself as an annual stint—a brisk, terse "light novel" to consume on a railway journey, a well-made play, a collection of competent reviews, a guide to good reading or to success as a writer, or a little book explaining how to get on well with your wife or how to make the most of twenty-four hours a day. Mr. Bennett is not in letters just for the fun of it, any more than Mr. Rockefeller is in oil. His mind is a first-class shop of honest bourgeois ideas which he turns out in workmanlike fashion and knows how to market. If he had been born in America he would have been described as a "typical Yankee," and he might have found sufficient glory and ade-

quate reward for his efficiency as editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* or as president of a moving-picture corporation.

In England it is still rather expected that an author who aspires to a place among the Immortals shall bestir himself to annex some new territory to the domain of British letters. Arnold Bennett met the test: he annexed the Five Towns. He possessed one great, sprawling, squalid, humdrum, pottery-manufacturing, unsung stratum of English life utterly: its topography, climate, architecture, history, economics, physiology, religion, politics, morals, education, social usages, human types. He saw in an intricate but marvellously clear and steady vision all the elements in society which are classified as environment; and, springing forth from that environment, all the elements which are classified as intelligence, will, and purpose; and these last, embodied in representative personages, enacting on the stage of the Five Towns, with tragic and comic *katharsis*, all the varieties of drama known to Polonius or Aristotle. When Arnold Bennett wrought out the Clayhanger trilogy, his efficiency was working humbly in the service of his genius: he was not a clever workman but a great novelist.

J·D·BERESFORD
T·S·A·D·MDCCCCXII

J. D. BERESFORD

J. D. Beresford may be roughly classified as of the school of H. G. Wells, in that he has made the realistic novel an essay in personal and nearly contemporary experience. But Beresford's work treats the drab commonplace of London and suburban life with a cold, earnest, humourless sincerity which reminds one less of Wells than of those pioneers of late Victorian realism, George Moore, author of *Esther Waters*, and George Gissing. Under the influence of foreign models, French and Russian, the new realists of the 'nineties discovered the artistic possibilities of the dingy; and in that medium they worked upon two pessimistic themes: they showed a dingy environment having its way, and they showed sexual passion or "vital force" having its way, with helpless characters. J. D. Beresford seems to have been caught and formed by that movement, and never wholly to have emerged from its gray, bleak, and depressing weather.

His most notable work hitherto may be regarded, however, as precisely an essay towards emergence from dinginess and from the formula of human impotence. The record is contained in his trilogy composed of the three tales of Jacob Stahl: *The Early History of Jacob Stahl*, *A Candidate for Truth*, and *The Invisible Event*. The hero is an impressionable, unplaced man of Jewish and Irish ancestry who is at the outset quite unequal to the stresses of his own passions and the pressure of his environment. At the conclusion of adventures squalid enough, he finds himself bound to a wife who does not live with him, and he is leading a heartless, lonely hand-to-mouth existence, as a reviewer of books, in a Bloomsbury boarding house, where, in the anguish of his solitude, he falls in love with his landlady. After frequent considerations of suicide, he asks her to join

him in an unconventional union in a cottage in Cornwall, while he is attempting to discover whether he can write a realistic novel.

As here outlined, the story of Jacob Stahl is of almost desperate squalidness. As a matter of fact the story is lifted above squalor by a sustained effort of courage and will—by the effort of both these lonely souls not to appear squalid to themselves or to one another. Through months of doubt and despair they struggle sadly but grimly to a point of view at which their self-approbation suffices them. With hands gripped in resolution they stand alone against the world. If they had set out in quest of pleasure or of any very joyous type of happiness, their search would have been frustrate; they would have been defeated by a universal conspiracy. They sought only knowledge of the metal of their own souls and self-realization in the bitterness of experience. This knowledge and this growth, as Beresford shows with patient persuasive veracity, were not denied to them. They win strength to become fully what they are.

Let us then remember Mr. Beresford and his trilogy with gratitude. In the story of Jacob Stahl, he slays the two chief tedious scapegoats of late Victorian realism; the scapegoat of environment and the scapegoat of "vital force." Jacob and Betty did not perhaps do anything of first-rate magnificence; but their adventure, such as it was, did not "happen" to them; they were its creators and masters.

Among Mr. Beresford's other books are: *God's Counterpoint*, *Housemates*, *These Lynnekers*, *The Wonder*, *The House in Demetrius Road*, *An Imperfect Mother*, *The Prisoners of Hartling;* also, in collaboration with Richard Beresford, *Poems by Two Brothers*. The characteristic note of the novelist rings out in these lines in *The Call of the Storm:*

Only in ceaseless strife
Canst thou unravel life,
  Canst thou its purpose test.

LAVIENGE
DINYON
T·S·S
1922

LAURENCE BINYON

Laurence Binyon is a perfectly sound English poet with a well disciplined ardour and a good ear for verbal music—for "words, breathing words, full-murmuring syllables," in which he has uttered nothing turbulent and nothing base. Emerging with a volume of lyrics in the middle 'nineties, he associated himself with the late Victorian group, including Stephen Phillips, William Watson, Sir Henry Newbolt, and Robert Bridges, which has striven, not without results, to sustain through an age of cynical wits and prosodical iconoclasts the high seriousness and the *alto stilo* of the Arnoldian and Tennysonian tradition.

The markings of an inadventurous poet formed in a powerful school identify the species but do not sharply distinguish the individual. Laurence Binyon has been so well content with the excellent and well established class into which he easily slipped that he has perhaps thought it wiser to accept and perfect its characteristics than by a wilful insistence upon his personal idiosyncrasies to attempt creating a new class of which he might be the last as well as the first representative. Instead of cursing those who have said his good things before him, he exhibits in his work rather a careful fidelity to the precincts of old shrines, a solicitude not to stray from the familiar paths of his predecessors.

All his poetic moments are typical: the glowing moment of mystical vision following an illness of adolescence; youthful dreams of a summer night, with vague hunger to encounter a dryad or some "divine and naked Corybant"; musing under Oxford spires and idyllic moments by Hinksey Ferry or threading the sedgy, heron-haunted upper reaches of the Thames; a choice which hovers in wintry woods between "beauty of young flames or wonder of white snow"; a yearning for experience and for

purity; odes to daffodils, pansies, harebells, tiger lilies, larks, beauty, time, love; then—the coming of love in the right high English fashion, with an Italian honeymoon and high earnest English lovers with hands clasped under the starry night, speaking of bygone saints and sages and dreaming of their own posterity, while they look down into "Umbria dim with valleys, dark with a hundred hills"; ambitious flights, variations on the death of Tristram, lofty blank verse on the death of Adam, Penthesilea; thunder on the Downs—the great war a troubling interlude in the fragrant quietude of country life—, blood on the grass, stretchers and the odour of blood among the white blooms in English gardens; proud speeches to the dead, and decorous, resonant, liberal addresses to France and America; disillusion; the discovery of evil; philosophic questionings; affirmation of the soul—"Deep, deep within man's soul are all his victories won"; return to the birds and flowers—to Mercy, Courage, Kindness, Mirth.

Such is Mr. Binyon's lyrical and narrative substance; and it is as "sound" as a sunrise, or a snow-bank, or a bank of primroses, or the song of a skylark, which would doubtless think us very impertinent or world-weary persons if we checked his sunward soaring to enquire how his song of today differed from yesterday's, and that from the song of his grandfather.

ADRIAEN
HEIDOLF
1512

ROBERT BRIDGES

The present Poet Laureate is a priest of Æsculapius who has devoted his leisure to the service of the Muses. In America he is probably better known for his study of Milton's prosody than for his own poems; yet, like his immediate predecessor in the laureateship, he is a conservative gentleman of classical taste and fluent and accomplished versification. A product of that long-lingering Renaissance which still retains at Eton and Oxford its predominance over the mediæval, Christian, romantic, and modern scientific elements in English culture, the imagination of Robert Bridges has never left the classical school, has never broken the Græco-Roman mould. When he goes swimming, for example, in an English river, it quite inevitably occurs to him to request the Hamadryades to watch his clothes.

He is at his best as a poet when he treats an ancient theme in the ancient manner, as in *Prometheus the Firegiver*, the first piece included in the Oxford edition of his works. Here the inescapable austerity and passion resident in the chosen subject rouse up his rather tranquil spirit and lift to an unwonted level his supple and skilful versification. The pastoral element in *Demeter* is but too congenial to his nature; and he smothers the terrors of Hades in flowers. In *Eros and Psyche*, rendering the famous tale of Apuleius, he shuns, like one of the good Victorians, its obvious sensuous possibilities, and sinks, pleasantly enough, into the dreamy chanting of pagan lays, of which William Morris was the great Victorian master. His sonnet sequence, *The Growth of Love*, would have made him in the Elizabethan Age a rival of the "well-languaged" Samuel Daniel. And so of his numberless odes and eclogues and elegies and songs one may say: they are quite uniformly deft, graceful, melodious; they would have

earned him praise and readers at an earlier period of the English Renaissance. Today they seem to be rather lacking in scent and colour and crisis. If classicists at all, we are children of the Roman decadence, and the pallid chastity of his classicism palls on our hearts. Like Propertius, we crave a sweetness that stings, a passion that bites, a love that leaves, the day after, the blue forget-me-not of incisive teeth.

Oddly enough, almost the only place in the Poetical Works where Robert Bridges fully emerges as a distinguishable modern personality is in a few half-humorous experiments in classical prosody, particularly his hexameters. In his epistle *To a Socialist in London*, he makes a striking plea for property, based on attachment to

> My Japanese paintings, my fair blue Cheney, Hellenic
> Statues and Caroline silver, my beautiful Aldines.

And in his epistle "To L.M.," he has two or three lively pages in glorification of modern surgery and medicine. If Horace could be consulted, one fancies he would find less to detain him in the Laureate's love lyrics than in his description of man's battle with disease before the discovery of bacilli:

> With what wildly directed attack, what an armoury ill-judged,
> Has he, (alas, poor man), with what cumbrous machination
> Sought to defend himself from their Lilliputian onslaught;
> Aye discharging around him, in obscure night, at a venture,
> Ev'ry missile which his despair confus'dly imagin'd;
> His simples, compounds, specifics, chemical therapeutics,
> Juice of plants, whatever was named in lordly Salerno's
> Herbaries and gardens, vipers, snails, all animal filth,
> Incredible quackeries, the pretentious jugglery of knaves,
> Green electricities, saints' bones and priestly anointings.
> Fools! that oppose his one scientific intelligent hope!

GROVER CLEVELAND
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

G. K. CHESTERTON

A solid, squarely planted figure with a defiant and challenging eye, ready to encounter all comers, Gilbert Keith Chesterton is a versatile man of letters with a mission which none of his manifold literary activities quite adequately illustrates. A redoubtable journalist, a fertile aphorist and tireless paradoxer, a scintillating essayist, a vigorous poet, a stimulating and original critic, a brilliantly illuminating biographer, ingenious romancer and writer of detective stories, sociologist, traveller, and theologian—Mr. Chesterton has agilely employed his ten talents and upwards to fortify the grand Chestertonian idea, which is, to cast a shimmering and iridescent veil of wit and romance over the plain body of common sense, and to reinvest in glory the traditional Anglo-Saxon Johnsonian Englishman, honest, prejudiced, virile, humorous, pious, violent, and sentimental.

Mr. Chesterton arrived when he was needed, towards the end of the Yellow 'Nineties, when a confluence of forces had made fashionable a multitude of un-English languors and dandyisms in society, Oriental and exotic symbolism in poetry, a drab and spiritless realism in fiction—impotence, pessimism, melancholia. While the world-weary and sin-bitten æsthetic young men of his time were sipping their absinthe and reading their Gautier and growing thin and refined and sad and apathetic, he, with a lively sense of his mission, was drinking his beer and reading his Dickens and growing burly and vulgar and jolly and bellicose. At the turn of the century, with fire in his eyes under broad, shaggy brows of a massive head merged in a great bulk of shoulder, he snorted with disgust and derision and the joy of battle, and charged through the blue china shop of the Yellow 'Nineties like a bison, with results enlivening to all beholders.

If Mr. Chesterton has made war against the æsthetic decadents because of their absurd hopelessness, he has made war against the sociological radicals because of their absurd hopefulness. Decadents and radicals are alike in their dull indifference to the actual proffered satisfactions of life. Mr. Chesterton would not swap fifty years of his own Merry England for a thousand years in any Utopia constructible by Messrs. Webb, Shaw, and Wells, or other scientific reformers. And so he has struck out lustily, sometimes blindly, sometimes victoriously, at all the current isms of his day: rationalism, cosmopolitanism, socialism, feminism, eugenics, free love, teetotalism, and vegetarianism.

According to his creed, beef, beer, romantic mating, monogamous marriage, domestic women, property, fighting, liberty, democracy, and a mystical religion are "the things of a man"; and he is for them. With too much loyalty to tradition for a modern Liberal, he praises with gusto the Church, Christmas, the Victorians, Dickens, English inns, brown oak, old wine, English buns, Dr. Johnson, Fielding, Pope, fairy-tales, King Alfred. "John Bull," he cries, "*for* all thy faults, I love thee still." A very sophisticated and exhilarating Conservative, Mr. Chesterton is formidable because he meets his adversaries with their own weapons of latest device and wields them with the accomplished ease and trenchancy of the deftest young Radical.

PADRAIC COLUM
S·S
A·D·1923

PADRAIC COLUM

Padraic Colum is probably associated in the minds of most American readers with that municipality of the Irish Republic which non-Gaelic-speaking people call New York, where largely through the columns of *The New Republic*, he has in the last half-dozen years become a familiar figure as a poet with the Celtic note and as a literary critic with special knowledge of Irish letters. As a matter of fact he is a genuine product of Young Ireland; and he made his record in Dublin so long ago that he may be looked upon by the youngest literary generation as a forerunner.

Twenty years ago Colum caught from the torches of Yeats and Hyde and Russell the flame of the new cultural nationalism, which then sought its ends primarily through the artistic expression of the racial consciousness. In a branch of the Gaelic League, with a simple-minded but religiously fervent group, he studied the sacred, difficult, and dying "native" language; he took part in the revival of folk-dances; he lent an attentive ear to the rhythm of peasant speech; he learned to cherish every particle of earthy idiom which distinguishes colloquial Anglo-Irish from "standard English." He was drafted as an actor into the first production of the Irish National Theatre Society. He shares with Synge the honour of inventing the drama of peasant life.

The earlier plays—*The Miracle of the Corn*, *The Land*, 1905, and *The Fiddler's House*, 1907,—lack the imaginative splendour and intensity and the bursts of lyric ecstasy which marked the brooding genius of Synge; yet from an historical point of view they are of high importance for the veracity of the characterization and for their idiomatic style. Synge blazed a path that only a Synge could follow; and he bewildered his peasant audiences with an alien and elvish laughter learned in his Euro-

pean vagabondage. He laughed over the head of Ireland. Colum, less personal and temperamental yet certainly more truly sympathetic with the elemental sentiments and passions which cluster about the peasant hearth and home, opened a vein of faithful realistic interpretation which Lady Gregory and many others have worked prosperously. In his recent Persian comedy, *Mogu, the Wanderer*, he has been diverted from his original path, perhaps by the influence of Lord Dunsany.

His poetic character, as exhibited in *Dramatic Legends* and *Wild Earth*, has as yet no very definite contour. It centres, indeed, in one grand passion—his love of Ireland. But he works from without inward, and except in a half-dozen love songs and in his keening for the Irish martyrs, his love disperses itself with equal and mild intensity over ploughmen and drovers and beggars and children in the cradle and spinning women and old women of the roads and ballad makers—as if with the deliberate intent of proving that nothing which is Irish can fail to appeal to the imagination as beautiful. To an Irishman, it must be remembered, it suffices merely to sound the enchanting syllables of the word Carricknabauna or Cruckmoylinn or Kuno Meyer or Roger Casement to evoke memories of piercing sweetness. In the rest of us, memory functions less richly and the spell is less potent.

To his other services as interpreter of the Celtic genius, Mr. Colum added in 1922 an interesting *Anthology of Irish Verse*, arranged to illustrate the emotional life of the people rather than to represent the individual poets. His latest publication is a somewhat chaotic Irish romance, *Castle Conquer*, as incoherently crowded with characters and incidents as a country fair.

JOSEPH·CONRAD
A·D
1921
T·S-S

JOSEPH CONRAD

His eyes are fixed forever on far sea-horizons—this entranced and entrancing captain of ships, master of melodious English, incomparable interpreter of the might and mystery of the sea. With Joseph Conrad on the bridge, who would not sail before the mast? What voyages out of Bangkok into the Indian Ocean or beating up the China Sea against the monsoon! What adventurous traffic with treacherous Malays or African cannibals amid the smothering heat of jungle-walled, fever-infested tropical rivers! What romance of South American revolution and decaying Spanish chivalry! What heroic encounters with destiny in typhoon, shipwreck, or solitary island! What appalling flashes of insight into the heart of the elemental and encompassing darkness which opens a little way before us, which closes so swiftly behind us, which wells up invasively from the abysses of our own souls.

Two contrasting elements conspire in the work of Conrad for its peculiar distinction and significance: a temperament which responds powerfully to the seduction of the elemental and a character which resists seduction.

Great winds and waters, strange lands and faces, exotic colour, the perfume of the East, barbaric feuds and hungry primitive lusts—under the plucking of these plectra his Slavic temperament vibrates like a lyre. Enchanted by its music, as a boy of seventeen, he brushed aside the accidents of his Polish blood and inland breeding to enter the English merchant marine and seek through the seven seas for the true Romance.

When he had tracked her to the fastnesses where poets fable that she dwells, he found she was not there. The true Romance was not there. The inside of adventure was shipwreck and starvation. The inside of

colonization was greed, hypocrisy, folly, cruelty, and slavery. The inside of the "Shining Orient" was famine, vermin, and pestilence. The inside of the splendour and immensity of Nature was chaos and horror—horror. And men who returned to Nature from the ennui of civilization, craving the refuge of her deep embrace, left their bloated bodies and marrowless bones to witness her faithlessness and their infamy.

Though Conrad's vision of Nature is tremendously disillusionizing, yet in the midst of his disillusion there gleams again for him, redemptively, the true Romance, the Great Adventure, namely, the discovery of one's own virtue, the maintenance, against the buffeting of the elements, of one's own essence. The more one reads these tales the more clearly one sees that Conrad has made his voyages religious symbols and his heroes incarnations of a faith, simple, traditional, tenacious. How shall we phrase it in congruent terms?—The great adventure is to sail the deep, to beat against the winds of destiny, and, though the bark springs a leak and is driven from her course and burnt at sea and the crew is cast away in an open boat, still to make haven at last, or to go down, if need be, with the honour and faithfulness and fortitude of a white man, an officer, and an English gentleman.

IVAH
DAVIES

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

From bending over a daisy, which he loves all the way down to its earthy root, he looks up with silent rapture into the white dazzle where a lark "raves in his windy heights above a cloud." With a brief bubbling song, like that of the American meadow lark, William H. Davies, the Monmouthshire poet, sings of children, birds, and flowers, of Molly's lips, of tankards of English ale, of lambs and cats and dogs, of Christmas and May morning, of the goodness and cheer of his vine-screened cottage —all with the innocence and simplicity and naïveté of a rustic bard who has not gone farther than a robin can hop from the lintel of his own door. If his character and career were to be deduced from the half-dozen little books of verse which he began to utter in middle life, little of evil and but a narrow range of experience would appear in the record.

Yet he has had experience enough. He has been, as we say, in Hell, though he did not seem particularly to mind it. The world for the young Welsh lad was so full of a number of things that it became a little confusing, and he began to loiter from one thing to another till the next thing he knew, he was a petty thief, a drunkard, and a vagrant, beating his way to America, tramping the West, breakfasting with hoboes in the woods, working for a spell with the harvesters, wintering by choice in some well-selected jail and out again in the spring for fresh adventures. So for years; till, jumping a freight-train bound for the far Northwest, he missed his footing, and lost his foot. Then home again by a cattle-boat to explore the depths of poverty, beggary, rascality, and squalor as an English tramp. This is the story told in *The Autobiography of a Supertramp*—a book so arresting by its facts and by its style that George Bernard Shaw stepped into the preface to call attention to the scandal.

When Davies reached the hard-pan of misery, when he touched at the bottom of Hell, then by some curious impulse, he began to sing. A tramp asks often but not much. He possessed a legacy which brought him ten shillings a week. With this and the proceeds of asking he paid his board and lodgings, sent a weekly remittance to an indigent friend, purchased a wooden leg, and out of his surplus published his first poems, which he then proceeded to hawk instead of pencils or pins. The poems require no special pleading; as a poet Davies is not a tramp. Something leathery and impervious in the tramp's integument has protected from the contamination of the world the pure little spring of joyous song in his soul. Critics gravely compare him with Blake, and even with Wordsworth, but he is almost quite devoid of mysticism. He seems rather like a rustic youth of the seventeenth century who on a dewy morning in Devonshire fell a-rhyming and a-quaffing ale with Robert Herrick till he fell asleep—to awaken three hundred years later singing alone in a London flophouse.

WALTER DE LA MARE

WALTER DE LA MARE

Walter de la Mare has a charm which admits him into the still air of lovers. He has also the mild-eyed gravity befitting one who converses on terms of equality with imaginative children. The least topical, the most timeless, of contemporary English poets, he has achieved, by subtle simplifications and delicious archaisms, the effect of Mother Goose rhymes revised and enlarged by the author of the dirge in Cymbeline. One fancies him writing with a quill pen by candlelight and pausing, now and then, to peer through the leaded panes of a vine-screened casement into the sparkling dusk of an early winter evening through which the rooks are winging their flight to an ancient wood. If he is not content with such lovely lyrics as *Shadow*, *Keep Innocency*, and *Fare Well* and with such exquisite and adorable fantasies as *Sam's Three Wishes* and *Phantom*, one can imagine him desiring to be the author of *Go, Lovely Rose*, or Vaughan's *Retreat*, or the songs of Sidney and Surrey, or the Robin Hood ballads or the Nun's Priest's tale of Chaucer.

His work, though it is not very definitely localized, is very definitely English, with centuries of quiet civilization working in it for choiceness of diction, lightness of touch, and a kind of pristine purity and limpidity of feeling. The accents of his praise fall upon things which take their beauty "from those who loved them in other days." There is little of romantic iridescence and nothing "lush" in the landscape which his poems leave as an abiding presence in the imagination.

He has a mediæval delight in pure colour—in blue and gold and scarlet; but his atmosphere, though bright, is frosty and still: the small red sun is mirrored in an icy pool; the witch in her crimson shawl comes over the snow; and elves in green and gold pop in and out among

the holly berries or vanish under immemorial yews encrusted with starry lichen.

In a world that is old and cold and bright with frost and stars, bliss is a little thing like a spark in the night, and the cosy and quiet folk are few —rabbits in their burrows, birds in their nests, and children in their beds. If one could draw a magic circle around their "infant joy" and keep it young forever! If a man had three wishes, would not the first bring back the roses to the old mother's cheek, and the second seat him at her knee, a boy again? Who could desire to be very great that had the choice of being very little?

The tiny person in Walter de la Mare's *Memoirs of a Midget* asks her mother of what God made all things in the forests and the birds in the sky.

" 'He made them,' said my mother steadily, 'of his Power and Love.'

" 'And can we, can I, make things of my power and love?'

" 'I suppose, my dear,' replied my mother reflectively and perhaps thinking of my father in his study, over his Paper and Hops, 'it is only *that* in life that is worth doing.' "

This prose romance bears a certain symbolical relation to the author's poetical career. Like his own midget, he has turned away from the "great" passions and "great" adventures of the modern world to steal through the lower panel of a door into an old lost garden, where he has gazed up at the stars so long that most human activities appear to him quite midgetary, and the only object which seems truly worthy of a poet's curiosity is the uncontaminated soul of a child in the moments when it is establishing its earliest imaginative relations with earth and heaven. This presence seals his lips from speaking of anything base except as a beast in a fable, and of anything grievous except as a memory and a tearless loveliness.

CHARLES M. DOUGHTY

Charles M. Doughty, an almost incredible survivor of the world's heroic age, is an English traveller and poet of patriarchal imagination and aspect who, in 1888, came into English literature riding on a camel out of the Arabian desert and bearing in his saddle-bags such a record of his wanderings as Boswell might have written had he been a companion of Moses in the exodus from Egypt. Animated in his early manhood by an immense hunger for racial experience, he swallowed modern European civilization at a draught, and, turning to the East, in the guise of a Syrian pilgrim he set out with a caravan from Damascus to retrace in sepulchral inscriptions and sand-smothered vestiges of lost cities the ancient migrations of the Semitic peoples. Enchanted by the discovery that Old Testament manners and customs flourished essentially unaltered on "the camping places of Moses," in the black tents of the nomads throughout the high Arabian table-lands, he roved for nearly two years among the Bedouins, and terminated his adventures in a perilous pilgrimage to the gates of Mecca, whence the sherif dispatched him to Jiddah—bronzed and gaunt and bruised and poor in the world's pelf but rich in knowledge of elemental humanity and elate with an enduring epical vision of human life.

His *Travels in Arabia Deserta* experts pronounce a work of marvellous realism, of devastating completeness, unique and indispensable. It is, moreover, a work of irresistible and absorbing fascination. Its power at first seems singularly impersonal and factual—the author being but a wide-open gate through which the caravan streams: first a whiff of the green gardens and fresh fountains of Damascus, and a glimpse of Gilead with "woodland limestone hills, full of balm-smelling pines and the tree

laurel with the sobbing sweetness and the amorous wings of doves"; then the motley and noisy assembling of litter-borne pilgrims, the grunting and smell of shuffling camels, the flutes and singing of the Persians, the shouting and cursing of the drivers; the signal gun, the long swinging march over league after league of burning wind-rifted sand, through air, under the raging midday sun, like flame; the thirst quenched in pools brackish and polluted with wind-blown dung, the prowling robber sheiks shadowy on the horizon, the mirage, the hyena glaring and gaping for the infirm and derelict; the swift-falling dusk, the star-canopied bivouac, the supper of dates and camel's milk, the watch-fires and the alarms of sentinels; the breaking of camp in the darkness or the gray chill of early dawn, the camels exhaling a frosty smoke at sunrising; the comfort of bitter coffee and the narghile; then the march again through the sun-baked, granite-fanged wilderness, with a tension of nerves daily increasing till the ache of fatigue subsides into a sun-drugged trance.

While Doughty travels with the caravan his individuality is merged in it as a pulse of its monotonous rhythm. But he leaves it to venture alone with a medicine bag, a barometer, and note-book, into fanatical villages where the Christian is hooted and stoned by children in the street as an enemy of the true God. At midnight he is ejected and set adrift in the desert. Each eventide he casts himself upon the bread-and-salt hospitality of some wandering swart-skinned sheik whose mouth is full of blessings and lies and curses and prayers, and whose only sure virtue is the "forbearing and abiding of hunger." Day after day he journeys afoot—his breast panting, half blind with ophthalmia, his nostrils spouting blood—accompanied by guides who are eager to cut his throat for a pipeful of tobacco. He is daily threatened with death, he is smitten in the face, he is clubbed with camel-sticks, he is robbed and stripped of his garments and cast into prison. He becomes a "prodigy of misery" but with never a whimper, with unflagging observation, with a large welcome for the

whole of his experience, for every manifestation of the common elements of our humanity. Thus emerges gradually, involuntarily, from the background of Arabian psychology with its violent but shallow passionateness a looming massive figure of rock-like character,who in utter solitude of spirit has endured the sufferings of an early apostle with the unshaken integrity of St. Paul. Well may Colonel Lawrence declare that he looks upon *Arabia Deserta* as a peculiar book, a kind of Bible of Arabia.

Doughty's highly original prose style is equal to its task. With its mingling of Elizabethan, Biblical, and Chaucerian English and its rich plunder of Arabic words it is indeed a barbaric instrument. But it is steadily full and precise; it is frequently of magnificent vigour and sweep; and in certain unforgettable passages it bites into the consciousness with the mordant simplicity of genuine epic—of Homer, of Beowulf. It overbears all criticism with stark, elemental reality.

Doughty's poetry includes, besides *The Cliffs*, 1909—a modern fantasy describing the invasion of England by dreadnoughts—three monumental pieces thoroughly characteristic of his imagination: *The Dawn in Britain*, 1906, a blank-verse epic in six volumes and twenty-four books concerned with the conflicts between the Romans and barbarians of northwestern Europe from 450 B.C. to the time of Caractacus; *Adam Cast Forth*, 1908, a sacred drama, of which the hero has been described as "both a grander and more humanly credible 'world father' than the scholastic creation of Milton"; and *Mansoul*, 1920, a narrative of the descent of the spirit of man into Hell, or the cave of Hertha, to enquire of Nebo, Zoroaster, Confucius, Socrates, and others of the mighty dead:

> What were indeed right paths of a man's feet;
> That lacking light, wont stumble in World's murk.

These works were conceived and executed with patriarchal earnestness. Their pictures of barbaric life and character have the special veracity compassable by a man deeply versed in tribal manners at the hunting and

pastoral stages. But his architecture and ornamentation is cyclopean. The uncouth vigour of his style does not in the least recall his avowed masters, Spenser and Chaucer; it reminds one rather of a jolting translation of Cædmon. The ox-wain grumbles and groans under the rough-hewn blocks which this stout, great-bearded Briton goads his labouring team to haul to his Stonehenge on the heights of Parnassus.

To feel the full force and windy beating of his stylistic pinion one returns to his characterization of a corrupt God-drunken Arab sheik whose "dunghill spirit" roving the infecund lonely desert of his mind "reverted to her wingless contemplation, at the gates of the Meccawy's Paradise."

JOHN D. RIKKWATER
1921

JOHN DRINKWATER

Before the war John Drinkwater was a lyric poet of a sort that American readers discover slowly and in no great numbers. His song came out of a quiet and happy life with books, nature, and friends. He loved England in a deep instinctive fashion which had nothing to do with the British Empire. He loved her for the pastoral beauty that springs from her forty shires—for her Cotswold farmers, her Derbyshire lovers, her Gloucestershire daffodils, her Avon meadows, for Grasmere and for Rydal Water. He loved her for Thomas Hardy and Wordsworth and Marvell and Herbert and Herrick and for all the English souls, serene and joyous, who, century after century, have drawn a little apart from politics and merchandising in order to taste untroubled the sweetness of shared solitude in a cottage overgrown with roses and supplied with apples from the orchard and currants from the garden. When Mr. Drinkwater wrote *Poems 1908-1919*, he was a recluse—with youth and plenty of social talent; yet the special notes of distinction in this book are notes of the recluse: a certain austerity in the art—a cherishing of the "difficult phrase"; and something of ascetic coolness and tranquillity at the heart of his ardour—notes which first estrange and then attract.

What should a poet inspired by a desire to leave "this beloved earth" more lovely for something that he has sung—what should such a poet write in the midst of a world war? Mr. Drinkwater wrote farewells to Rupert Brooke and Francis Ledwidge, the young Astrophels of his age. He produced besides, between 1915 and 1917, at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, three poetic plays: *The Storm*, *The God of Quiet*, and *X=0: A Night of the Trojan War*, which together with *Cophetua*, an earlier piece, were in 1920 published in the United States in a single volume entitled *Pawns*.

These are not war plays. They are plays by one of beauty's protestants who hears above the battle a sound of music "as of beating wings of loves that sway the world without a thought of beggars or of kings." *X=0* is a poet's despairing summary of the net results for beauty of a night's raid around the walls of Troy, in which two young poets and lovers, one on each side of the battle, descend with cut throats to the shades of Orcus, reluctantly renouncing for a half-forgotten cause all the sweet promise of "thronging life."

In 1918, after reading Lord Charnwood's admirable *Lincoln*, Mr. Drinkwater produced with immense effect, first in England and then in the United States, his play *Abraham Lincoln*. Some part of the success of this dramatization was undoubtedly due to notable acting of the principal rôle and some part to the extraordinary preparedness of the public mind on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet even in the printed book, where the bald simplicity of language and characterization and the gauntness of the structure are obvious, Mr. Drinkwater's clear apprehension of the essentials is impressive. In Lincoln he finds "a man who handled war nobly and with imagination"; he finds a warrior who can command the allegiance of a man of peace.

LORD DUNSANY
MDCCCLXXVII

LORD DUNSANY

His Celtic-Norman ancestors have dwelt in the isle of dreamers for a thousand years, and almost inevitably he turns to literature as to a magical window opening into the long ago and far away. "In the blood of man," he chants in musical and hypnotic cadences, "there is a tide, an old sea-current rather, that is somehow akin to the twilight, which brings him rumours of beauty from however far away, as driftwood is found at sea from islands not yet discovered." And then Lord Dunsany throws back his head and looks through the window of imagination over the men in the street, over the chimneys and housetops, over the fields of war, over the mountain rim, over the Edge of the World. He looks long and intently, till in his twilight vision rise towered cities marvellously shining, and enchanted dragon-haunted forests, and, on the outskirts of a troubled heaven beyond this perilous new world, strange forms of gods moving.

A clear and memorable dream becomes a piece of reality. The dream-faculty in most of us is defective: we see shapes in cloud and mist but they dissolve and escape us and are forgotten; we cannot hold our vision. Lord Dunsany, a master-dreamer, a true myth-maker, penetrates the shifting mists which fringe the horizons of Terra Incognita and pushes on into the interior and primitive regions of wonder, where in an air of crystalline clearness, the incredible is tangible, and one bursts through bruising shadows as dense and hard as a thicket of spears, counts the scales of behemoth and whets a sword on his emerald eyes, or stumbles up stairways of cloud palaces hard as marble, on whose vaulted roofs the motes of the sunbeams ring with a clangour of golden rain.

Other pilgrims in the realms of faëry—Beckford, Poe, Baudelaire—

have possessed some portion of this Irish Prospero's power of musical incantation and gorgeous picture. Dunsany, both as dramatist and teller of tales, adds to his sumptuous feast for the eye ravishing notes for the heart—notes of the quaintest humour, and caressing tenderness, and undying fortitude. Above all, like flights of crying birds flying by in the night, there sweep through these pages notes of dolour and pathos for "glad unnoticed things men see and do not see again," for proud and beauteous things now bygone and forgotten, for the malignity of time, for the triumph of the spider, lord of buried cities, for the hush where Babbulkund was and the sand rests and the wind sleeps, for worlds that have disappointed the gods, and for gods that have disappointed men and that under the slabs of ruined temples lie prostrate and are remembered no more forever.

S^T J
ERVINE
S J

ST. JOHN ERVINE

St. John Ervine is an important link between the Irish Renaissance and the main movement of English literature. He insists upon writing for the sense of the English-speaking peoples of the earth. He just as stoutly insists upon the legitimacy of his Irish spokesmanship. He knows his countrymen, peasant and landed gentleman, Belfast ship-builder and Dublin poet and conspirator. His ancestors have dwelt in County Down for three hundred years, and he has not, as he boasts, a drop of English blood in his veins. He will not object to our calling him a "typical Irishman," if we take care to observe that he is not a Nationalist nor a Catholic nor a peasant nor a dreamer nor a believer in fairy-tales, but a quite modern realistic positive free-thinking Protestant gentleman and scholar of the north country who holds, like his father before him, that Great Britain is, with all her damnable faults, the finest country in the world, Ireland the finest part of the Empire, Ulster the finest part of Ireland—and, possibly, the Ervines the finest part of Ulster.

St. John Ervine has contributed to the Irish Renaissance some admirable plays and novels, but perhaps his most important contribution is the aggressive spirit of responsible common sense and plain-spoken criticism which underlies all his work. He is interested in the Irish Question but only as an aspect of the human question. In *Changing Winds*, for example, a notable piece of fiction substantially founded in autobiography and history, he leads one up to the World War by way of the Easter Insurrection in Ireland; but the young Ulster novelist who attains his stature in those events becomes significant not as an Irishman but as one of a group of young men drawn from various corners of the British Isles, which is bent upon representing the brains and ambition of the Younger Generation.

The soil of his native land he loves, indeed, fervently enough to press it to his lips; but the ecstatic nationalistic activities of his countrymen, their Gaelic revival in the schools, their political resuscitation of obsolete superstitions he regards with indifference, with derision, with pity qualified by contempt. He sees the Irish peasantry as an imaginative, unstable, and, above all, an ignorant folk easily moved to tragic folly by the machinations of Jesuits and aliens. He does not hesitate to declare that the English, though often stupid and unimaginative, are superior in experience and knowledge. And after sitting at the feet of all the doctors of the age from Sir Horace Plunkett, G. B. Shaw, and "A. E." to Balfour, Chesterton, and H. G. Wells, he accepts the humorous wisdom of his father:

"I declare to my goodness, the best thing that could happen to the two of us, the English and the Irish, would be for some one to pass a law compellin' every Irishwoman to marry an Englishman, an' every Englishwoman to marry an Irishman. We'd get some stability into Ireland then . . . . an' mebbe we'd get some intelligence into England."

One may study the extension of this idea in St. John Ervine's work into a general vision of human nature as a drossy stuff, God forgive it, traversed by veins of pure gold, God save it. In *Mrs. Martin's Man*, in *Jane Clegg*, in *John Ferguson*, one sees drunkenness, selfishness, cowardice, bitingly depicted, yet always depicted in contention—often in the same family, sometimes in the same individual—with elements of humour, charity, patience, and fortitude, which, though they may not triumph, yet struggle so gallantly that one says, "It is a good fight; it ought to be continued. There is, after all, an enduring beauty in man and in nature. Let us seek for it there and not in fairyland. The crock of gold may be the kettle on the hearth. A little less fancy and a little more thought. It doesn't seem right somehow to have a mind and not use it."

JOHN·GALSWORTHY
MCMXXI

JOHN GALSWORTHY

John Galsworthy has a secondary sense which is critical and satirical, but he is primarily a man of feeling. His distinction as novelist and dramatist is due to the delicate quickness of his sympathies and to the quivering vitality of his expressions of misery and felicity. "I feel; therefore I am" is the first article of his creed. "The more I feel the more I am" is the second. And the third is: "The successful life is measured by its moments of ecstasy." In revulsion from squalor, humdrum, smugness, conventionality, insensitiveness—whatever inhibits feeling or renders it unpleasant—he became an artist and, in theory, an "enemy of society." But his instinct for felicity, which is deeper than his theory, his instinct for what is fine and select in felicity, has made him one of the most sophisticated, suave, and seductive painters of prosperous upper-middle-class society, in which preëminently exist the means for procuring and the sensibilities for enjoying the delectable.

In his earlier work irritated humanitarian sympathy was a dominant note. Mr. Galsworthy, like Cowper, is averse to numbering on his list of friends a man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm. He is an eloquent member of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Vivisection and the caging of birds darken the heavens for him. As he pats the heads of his own dogs, an aching tenderness runs from his fingertips to the human underdog—to tramp and prostitute and hungry working man. And out of this tenderness is born a hatred for the insolence of rank, the oppression of wealth, the callousness of established powers. He hates to see people owned and imprisoned—servants by their masters, children by their parents, wives by their husbands, husbands by their wives. Under the scourge of his own pain, he turns questioningly in pursuit of freedom and justice,

crying out in a voice disquieting to men of property, that the passion for property is at the heart of all injustice and every form of servitude.

The first impulse of the pleasurable no less than that of the painful emotions prompts him towards a hostile criticism of the social order. A passion for beauty—a passion rooted in sex and flowering in the imagination—is, as he presents it, incomparably the greatest of pleasures, even when its issue is tragic. It gives to life the one meaning that can satisfy the heart. It is the touch of enchantment in painting and music. The bloom and fragrance of nature last while it lasts and pass when it passes. The bliss of youth is expectation of it and the still ecstasy of old age is its memory. But this passion is masterless and its breath is freedom. Like a celestial flame it descends upon whom it pleases. The blessed among the children of men kindle at its touch and rejoice, or they would do so if moral—that is, property—considerations did not so often arrive upon the scene with a fire-extinguisher.

While he is depicting the delicious agony and the sweet ravishment of this passion, which in *The Forsyte Saga*, for example, he has studied at all ages from eighteen to eighty, Mr. Galsworthy himself is completely captivated by it. He is ready, with its exultant victims, to cast into the sacred flame the entire edifice of an unfriendly civilization. No novelist of our time comes so near to persuading us that for passion's brief all-sanctifying hour the world were well lost—he knows so well how to make it rich and thrilling with purple dusk and stars, with gusts of moonlit honeysuckle and the soft breath of heliotrope over shadowy lawns, the intimate low murmur of a river, and rapture leaping from heart to heart like lightning in the summer night.

Compared with this fulness of exquisite experience, what is character? What is virtue? What is law? What, in short, is "property"? Nothing! . . . Nothing?

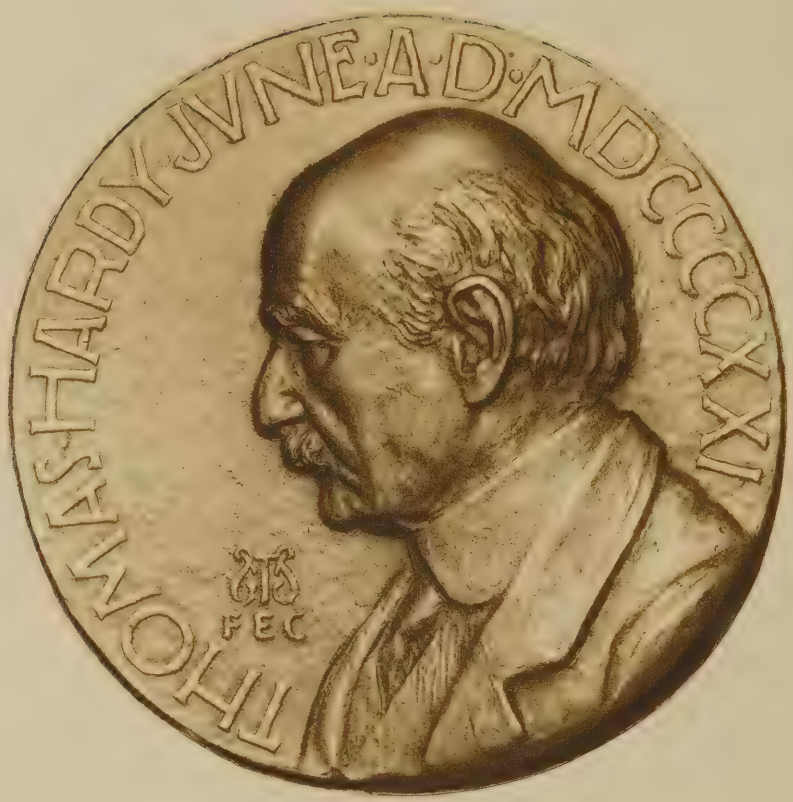
Well, take the case of the "man of property" Soames Forsyte, his deli-

cious wife Irene, and her two lovers, the architect Bosinney, and the artist Jolyon, in that great novel of three generations, which we have mentioned—*The Forsyte Saga*. Here Mr. Galsworthy has sought to embalm for posterity upper-middle-class society at the end of the Victorian Era, ripening towards its decline. Desire is the father of belief; and the romantic heart of the novelist would like to believe that the passion for possession which held together the structure of Victorian society is now giving way to a younger generation's passion for freedom and beauty. Out of the depths of his own sympathy with fettered loveliness, he adores his heroine Irene, whose claim on consideration is almost purely Cytherean. He justifies her revolt from her husband, who regards her as his precious chattel. He presents her husband's exaction of marital rights as the one intolerable crime in the narrative. He appeals for our support when Irene attempts to elope with Bosinney; we, however, are rather glad that this first lover is killed, for the fellow is poor and no proper recipient of a fugitive Cytherea. But he justifies Irene by all the essential consequences when, in contempt of the Victorian sense for the sacredness of contract, she deserts her husband to live with the artist Jolyon Forsyte; for Jolyon's father was a man of property, and has left his son the means necessary for the maintenance of a Cytherea.

Thus, with every resource of a seductive style and a penetrating imagination, Mr. Galsworthy seems to challenge the dominion of property over the passionate flowers of the heart; yet in the same breath he recants his challenge. If you are going to be a trenchant and unambiguous "enemy of society," your sympathies must be blind of one eye, and must leap without circumspection to the side of beauty and passion. The sympathies of Mr. Galsworthy grow steadily circumspective. He pities and adores Irene. Yes; but he also pities and understands Soames Forsyte. He understands that Soames and his propertied contemporaries have a case which cannot lightly be thrown out of court. They have an equity in the Irenes

which is not dependent on the terms of the marriage contract. These Cytherean women, in whom the mysterious potency of beauty attains its highest power, are not merely the acquisitions but are also the creations of a well-propertied class. The panoply of their charms, the felicity which they can impart, and even their existence, depend upon the presence somewhere of an inexorable grip which holds fortunes and families together. When a bird breaks from one of the gilded cages of the men of property, there must be somewhere another gilded cage for the fugitive to enter. We reach the conclusion that, for a heart in love with felicity, there is no choice between beauty and property: one has to have them both!

Mr. Galsworthy in his secondary capacity as critic knows that "property" is not *everything*—that it is not, for example, Aucassin and Nicolette. But he sees clearly enough that "property" is the indispensable stage-manager and the provider of the properties. If you read attentively, you observe that in the last century Galsworthy heroes and heroines rode thoroughbred horses and that they are now using the highest grade of cars; that men who pluck with grace "the dark flower" hesitate between diamond brooches and pearl necklaces to adorn the delight of their eyes; that beauty such as disturbs the established order is always exquisitely gowned and exhales the rarest essences; that romantic youth runs over to Italy or Spain to cure a fit of indecision; that parents collect Corots and Goyas for the walls of their very charming country places; and that, after all, you probably could not arrange an adequate setting for one of these world-sacrificing passions with less than a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand pounds to fall back upon. Thus the logic of beauty and high passions, starting with a major premise of lawless splendour, passes through a minor but inevitable consideration to a quite "conservative" conclusion.


THOMAS·HARDY·IVNE·A·D·MDCCCLXXXII
FEC

THOMAS HARDY

A quiet man, "scathed and memoried" by fourscore years and upwards, Thomas Hardy stands by his garden gate in the twilight of a scented summer evening and gazes with a pitying scrutiny into the cankered heart of a rose. "Wonder and wormwood! Wormwood and wonder!" he murmurs to himself; and these are the two poles of his meditation on the mystery of life.

No other author of the Victorian time has cut a sharper silhouette against his century. He has left an impression of high sincerity and integrity. He has treated things human and divine with the austerity and the tenderness which mark a writer in the grand style. Fascinated by the intensity of his sombre vision, we have praised him for his unflinching representation of the blight which infects the world.

Yet whenever we escape from the immediate spell of his temperamental melancholy, we perceive that he is not a mere transcribing realist bent upon recording the flaws in creation, but a poet, whether he writes in verse or in prose, and a great interpreter and creator. Pessimism imparts indeed a tang of personality to the atmosphere of his Wessex; but the singular and abiding value in the scene is a kind of struggling imaginative splendour and magnificence. Dreaming there in his Dorsetshire garden, he retains in an age of disheartening realism a sense for the inscrutable wonders which perplexed Job and Æschylus; and, expressing that sense, he has created a universe extraordinary in beauty and terror.

In protest against the impersonal and materialistic thought of his time, which was shrinking the universe to the insignificance of a dog-cage, Thomas Hardy restored an overshadowing maleficence, and rendered it impressively credible by exhibiting its effects in the tangled web

of human affairs woven by the sorceries of his art. Musing on the canker in the rose with the utmost seriousness of a tragic imagination, he conceived a God to account for the rose and the canker: a God who is the source of all energy, contriver of all circumstances; the supreme ironist, enigmatic, mocking, whimsically cruel, yet himself so cross-purposed and so blindly fumbling towards some higher form of activity than he has yet enjoyed that even a mortal is constrained to pity the President of the Immortals as the great Scapegoat of the universe—to say nothing of such subaltern ministers of his as Chance, Fate, Time, Sickness, Death, and their human victims.

Under this overarching dominion of supernal powers, flashing its lights and shadows upon the earthly scene, he created Wessex—no mere tract of earth but a tract of time as well, a tract enriched with an ancient past, opening dim vistas into mediæval cloisters, Saxon villages, Roman forts, grim Druidic ruins, and dusky recesses of the stone age. Memoried time, pregnant with dooms, broods like a purple haze over the fair southern English countryside with its sheep-cotes and granges, its clustering hamlets, cathedral towns, harvest fields, rich vales, slow rivers, woods, hills, barren heath, and wave-beaten headlands with the sea-mews wheeling in the briny Atlantic air. Here honest rugged yeomen and young men of aspiration and talent fall desperately in love with lonely and perilously lovely romantic heroines without an idea in their heads and with no apparent business in the world but to wreck the lives of their lovers. Passionate love thwarted and brought to disastrous issue by a conspiracy of accidental circumstance with the imperfections in man's nature, is the soul of the plot. A humorous choric comment is provided by groups of weathered and earthy peasants, garrulously and superstitiously chattering over the mishaps of a modern civilization which they view with the curious nonchalance of Saxon churls watching the burial of the arrow-stricken body of William Rufus.

HOUSTON

RALPH HODGSON

In England a poet who lacks a heart-ravishing trochaic epithet for April or a hedgerow calls it "English," and lets it go at that. We know what he means because for many centuries in his little island no sun has risen, no lark has soared, no primrose has blossomed unnoticed or unsung. If some day the sun should fail to appear and the lark should oversleep and the primrose not unfold, the poets would not wait for prompting. They have the appropriate music all by heart, or, if some strain escaped them, by a half hour's stroll through the musty book-shops of Charing Cross Road, inhaling the *pot-pourri* laid up in other years by forgotten poets, they could recover every quaver of Spring's alleluias and every fragrance of her winds, and return undismayed to their posts on the morning papers or under the windows of the Bloomsbury lodging-houses, singing, "Who'll buy my sweet lavender?"

If Ralph Hodgson had been born in some wild country, not yet mulched with an ancient culture, like central Australia or Labrador or the United States, he probably would have been a shepherd or a master of reindeer or a breeder of thoroughbred horses for the Kentucky races; and perhaps he would not have written at all. For he is a lover of animals and is moved most by a deep instinctive sympathy for the life that is in shy, inarticulate creatures—for canine fidelities and bovine placidities and taurine rages and the melody that gushes wordless from the palpitating throats of birds. As a literary man lacking large scope for his passion, he satisfies his hunger with pets. After a twilight stroll with his bull-terrier in a quarter of the town where the points of a dog are appreciated, he will retire to his rooms and hymn the lovely bow-legged beauty in such phrases as other bards have lavished on the eyebrows of a mistress. One of the

longest and best of his poems is an imaginative penetration of the mind of an old bull, "surly, stupid, half asleep," who recollects in the sombre tranquillity of decrepitude his awkward calfhood, the fights of his ambitious youth, and the glories of successful passion and of undisputed leadership which marked his prime.

In his first slim volume of verse, *The Last Blackbird*, published in 1907 and reprinted in 1921, Hodgson has a characteristic poem entitled, *The Vanity of Human Ambition and Big Behaviour*. It shrewdly appraises the satisfaction of going down to posterity in a long article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. All that is to him most precious in books, the gypsy knows. All that is best in poetry, the poet has overheard. It is not his grand inventions. It is nothing which can be much improved by human composition. It is wood notes wild. It is what clutches at his legs and caresses his cheek and clings to his coat and whispers and pipes to his ear as he presses through a flowering dew-drenched thicket. It is the sight and scent of evasive and evanescent things: something spilled on the page and caught in a net of rhyme—pollen and dew, moths sipping fuchsias by the sea, the look in a lizard's eye, the cloud bank and the golden fang of lightning, or moony bubbles racing down a stream into the dark. The poet's honour lives not on the lips of applauding multitudes. It is a sweet aspersion which the heavens let fall on hermits and on shy frequenters of nature's "green confusion." To add a linnet's note to an English summer, to be a clear pool that mirrors for a moment the goldfinch's wing—this is enough. And that is why an English poet who lacks a heart-ravishing epithet for April or hedgerow calls it "English."

A·E·H
1922

A. E. HOUSMAN

In 1895 a young poet from that border county of England which looks eastward into Staffordshire and westward into Wales drew off the bitter wine of his youth in a slender volume of verse, *A Shropshire Lad*, which was swiftly recognized as a little classic. Then, after a silence of nearly thirty years, he produced in 1922 a second slender volume called *Last Poems*, prefaced by the statement: "It is not likely that I shall ever be impelled to write much more." By what professorial expedients he now maintains the decorous elderly mask of English citizenship is a matter of but faint interest to poetry; for the wine of the last book is of the same vintage as the first and smacks of the same cask. A. E. Housman is and will remain the Shropshire Lad, and nothing more. Perhaps that is enough.

He sings of a pastoral land where the moons of Maytime work sweet madness among the fragrant haycocks, under the flowering hawthorn, and along the white road to Ludlow fair. There light-foot lads and rose-lipt maidens make quick exchange of hearts. Deep draughts of ale drown the woes of slighted shepherds, but ever and anon a passionate knife-thrust compels some golden girl to ask herself what joy she shall have of a lover who sleeps under six feet of earth. The sweetness that these young folk snatch has the poignancy of evanescent things—the white riot of plum-blossoms against rain and the scattering wind, the bright eagerness of flame rushing on darkness like a bride. After a night of revelry, in the cold and unimpassioned dawn, "the young man feels his pockets and wonders what's to pay." Sometimes it is suicide, sometimes the gallows, and sometimes the drum and fife call him away to lay his bones on African veldt or Indian mountain. In the end, all roads, however sunlit, go

into the night, and the mouths of the bravest and the fairest are soonest stopt with dust.

The charm of the *Shropshire Lad* and its sequel is curiously produced by a system of stabbing intensifications: violent deeds on a background of pastoral loveliness, the sweetness of life insistently edged by the sharpness of death, passions of a stark and primitive simplicity enveloped in a philosophy of philosophic pessimism that is older than Solomon. Considered as a literary confection, the song of A. E. Housman might be described as a transposition of Omar-Fitzgerald in the key of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. In the process the gentle Epicureanism of Fitzgerald has been strongly tinctured with bitterness and his language somewhat brutalized. Lines like these:

> Could man be drunk for ever
> With liquor, love, or fights,
> Lief should I rouse at morning
> And lief lie down at nights.

or

> We for a certainty are not the first
> Have sat in taverns while the tempest hurled
> Their hopeful plans to emptiness, and cursed
> Whatever brute and blackguard made the world—

these are lines which the elder poet would scarcely have admitted to his sweet-scented manuscripts; yet in the Shropshire idiom they sound the same note of revolt. They make the same profound appeal to the reckless blood of youth.

W·H·HUDSON·
A·D·1921·

W. H. HUDSON

This shy field-naturalist and romancer passed through a long period of poverty, illness, and public indifference to his work, to end his days in a blaze of glory. When English and American writers like Galsworthy and Theodore Roosevelt and William James and Edward Garnett and William Lyon Phelps unite to create a reputation, the thing is done in no half-hearted fashion. Hudson is before us now as a "very great writer," a great naturalist, a marvellous stylist, author of masterpieces of romance, *Green Mansions* and *The Purple Land*, "the best short story in the English language," *El Ombu*, and a score of other volumes of bird-books, tales, and reminiscences, each one so fascinating that readers who have tasted one "cannot be restrained" from rushing to the rest. "Of all living writers—," says Mr. Galsworthy, "now that Tolstoi has gone—I could least dispense with W. H. Hudson."

These tributes were rendered in the extravagance of belated friendly admiration; and they go rather over the mark. Hudson was a pretty but by no means an impeccable writer. In spite of Mr. Galsworthy, there is no "philosophy" of any importance collectible from his works. His tales, when expanded beyond anecdotes, tend strongly towards the fantastic. His most urgently lauded masterpiece, *Green Mansions*, is as wildly fantastic as Sir Rider Haggard's once renowned but now forgotten fantasy, *She*. It is a story of romantic nympholepsy in a South American forest, the nymph in question being a wholly incredible creature, half woman and half bird, who weaves herself a chemise of spider's web, and converses with her lover in stilted English or Spanish, when she does not employ an ornithological dialect comprehensible to herself alone.

Hudson had an interesting early life among unfamiliar scenes, in which

he discovered the joy of wild nature and developed an especial passion for birds. By far the most valuable portion of his work is the product not of his imagination but of his observation and his experience. *Far Away and Long Ago*, unmodified save by the glamour of memory, is worth a dozen *Green Mansions*.

With American-born parents but with an English heart and ancestry, Hudson waked to consciousness of the world on a sheep-ranch harbouring a little lonely and musty Anglo-Saxon culture in a wide land of pampas, where old Spanish patriarchs peopled their domains with half-breed bastards, and fierce gauchos, quick at the knife-play, peerless in the saddle, rounded up myriads of cattle to a wasteful slaughter for horns and hides, in the primitive days when plague-ravaged Buenos Aires stank like a shambles. Scenes of cruelty, tumultuous fires and storms on the plains, the passing of a routed army—these things stamped themselves on the boy's brain like spots of savage colour. But the rich vein in the narrative is the remembered joys of youth, its escapades and adventures, the first horse, the first gun, questing the eggs of the golden plover, duck-hunting in lonely marshes at dawn, senses quickening to the coming and passing of flowers in the spring and to the melody of migrating flocks of subarctic birds. These things, first taken with a frolic welcome, grow steadily to a fixity of interest, and as the boy advances into the essential solitude of early manhood, they become the subject of a passion almost mystical and of an indescribable sweetness: this is the charm which makes hardened critics murmur over W. H. Hudson like a swarm of intoxicated bees.

DOUGLAS HOUGHTON
A D
1922

DOUGLAS HYDE

A great scholar with the soul of an Irish peasant, Douglas Hyde has been for many years the undisputed and beloved leader in the movement for de-Anglicising Ireland by the revival of the ancient language and literature of the Irish Celts. As a student at Trinity College, Dublin, in the 'eighties, he won brilliant distinction in German, French, Celtic, Italian, English composition, history, and oratory. Mr. Yeats recalls him as in his undergraduate days "a very dark young man, who filled me with surprise, partly because he had pushed a snuff-box towards me, and partly because there was something about his vague serious eyes, as in his high cheek-bones, that suggested a different civilization, a different race." Though the son of a Protestant clergyman, continues Mr. Yeats, "he had much frequented the company of old countrymen, and had so acquired the Irish language, and his taste for snuff and for moderate quantities of a detestable species of illegal whiskey distilled from the potato by certain of his neighbours." What is more important, in his wanderings through the Connaught villages, he had been penetrated by the soul of the folk, and he had already begun to make songs for them in the native tongue.

In these circumstances, Hyde had a vision out of which was born a great indignation and a lifelong passion. He saw an ancient European literature and civilization, the richness of which he was one of the half-dozen men in the world capable of appraising, and he saw an ancient language, once spoken by four or five millions of people, on the verge of extinction under the English education imposed upon Ireland by an alien government. To him, as to Lessing and Herder, chafing under the Gallic-Latin domination of Germany in the eighteenth century, there appeared, as it were in a vision of the night, the infinitely adorable spirit of his

native land, her pristine loveliness in chains, crying, "Deliver me!" He arose at daybreak and sought her.

He followed her footsteps in the cabins of Connaught; he collected her songs from the lips of old women spinning in the sun and her tales from the old men dreaming by their cottages; he searched out her legends and proverbial wisdom in decaying manuscripts. Far back in 1889 he published his first collection of Irish stories and folk-tales. Since that time his scholarship has been diligently devoted to preserving and rendering accessible in English and in Gaelic the oral and written record of his race and nationality. Among his notable works, beside his own poems and plays, may be mentioned, *The Love Songs of Connacht*, 1894; *A Literary History of Ireland*, 1899; *Legends of Saints and Sinners;* and the two volumes with running commentary, *The Religious Songs of Connacht*.

In 1892 he formulated his nationalistic creed in a lecture, "The necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland." In 1893 he founded the Gaelic League, of which he remained president for twenty-two years. The primary purpose of the League was to organize instruction in Irish throughout the island. The hundreds of groups which eventually were enlisted in the linguistic revival became inevitably centres for the manifold enterprises of the national renaissance. Mr. Yeats laments that a poet of promise and "the greatest folk-lorist who ever lived" were ruined and lost to the world when Douglas Hyde became absorbed in propaganda and seduced by the triumphs of oratory. But if one considers his original collections of folk-lore, the fruits of his editorial labours, his literary history, and his contribution to the instruments of expression in the first "discovery" of the Anglo-Irish dialect which the Dublin poets have perfected, he appears as a great and richly successful pioneer in one of the most interesting movements of our time.

A·D
1927
T·S

JAMES JOYCE

James Joyce is now one of the storm centres of critical controversy. He is author of a volume of poems, *Chamber Music;* an Ibsenish drama, *Exiles;* a collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, somewhat in the vein of the early, realistic George Moore; a first volume of confessions, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;* and *Ulysses*, a convulsive and volcanic eruption of the chaos which churns in the slimy and serpent-haunted caverns of human nature. *Ulysses* is perhaps the most loathsome and questionable "human document" hitherto offered to the English-speaking world as a work of art. Whether this ominous performance presages a literary revolution and the ultimate surrender of the creative imagination to psychopathology, and whether James Joyce is Ireland's greatest writer or an impossible monster of morbidity or both or neither, are questions which one should not attempt to answer in the first astonishment produced by his latest "masterpiece." The blaring *fortissimo* of superhuman disgust which stuns one in *Ulysses* may not be the author's last word in the "criticism of life" but only the *finale* in the emancipative movement of a much-tortured spirit, conceivably to issue through the dissonance of brass and clashing cymbals upon silence and new melody of flutes.

Joyce's present literary purpose is succinctly stated by Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as follows: "This race and this country and this life produced me. I shall express myself as I am." The Dedalus of this portrait is presented as an intelligent and ambitious boy, "proud and sensitive and suspicious, battling against the squalor of life and against the riot of his mind." His evolution has three distinct phases. There is first a phase of acute and excruciating mental and physical perturbation during early adolescence, in which sexual curiosity and gnawing

lust infest him day and night, bite into the marrow of his bones, and well-nigh strangle him in the obscene wallow of his desires. From this obscure agony, he emerges spent, breathless, gasping, into a pale and temporary religious peace under the auspices of his Jesuit instructors. After he has emptied his sins into the ear of a priest, he kneels at the altar in a sickly languor of inanity and spent animal energy, in a desireless bliss—"and in the pale morning light the pale flames of the candles among the white flowers were clear and silent as his own soul." In his third phase, he begins to conceive that the spirituality which the priest preaches is but the shadowy reflex of the sensuality which he practises. His own purity he looks upon as provoked by his lust and his lust as provoked by his purity in devastating alternations of attraction and repulsion. In a desperate craving for rest, he gropes for an æsthetic philosophy which shall bring him to a state of stable equilibrium; he sighs for an art which shall arrest the mind with beauty and lift it above both desire and loathing.

Ulysses is not the work of a man who has entered into a New Jerusalem of art. It is rather to be regarded as a gigantic attempt at æsthetic purgation outside the gate. It is free from one of the marks of what Joyce himself considers "improper" art: it does not, one must suppose, in any mature mind, excite desire. But unquestionably it has Joyce's other mark of "improper" art: it does excite loathing. It affects one like an emetic. It seems to have originated in fathomless disgust for almost every force of race, country, and time which made James Joyce what he is. It is just possible, to be sure, that he himself has attained a point of view at which he is as little perturbed by vermin and excrements as a physiological chemist. If so, his is the point of view not of art but of science. But it seems more likely that his Jesuit education and the culture of Latin Christianity are still uneasily fermenting in him. He seems animated by an allotropic form of religious vanity with a desire to be known as the chief of sinners.

JOHN MASEFIELD
A·D
MCMXXII

JOHN MASEFIELD

A long-limbed west-countryman with the salt wind in his hair, sea-sorrow in his eyes, and in his heart and on his lips song abundant, fresh, and various, John Masefield is the most vitally traditional and the most poignantly English of living poets. Song craft he learned of great masters —Byron, Shakespeare, Spenser, Chaucer, forerunners whose mastering music he remembers in many a swinging narrative and subtle sonnet. But he sings out of deep and original experience enriched by impassioned meditation, and with his own individual lilt and raciness of diction. In his voyages and pilgrimages he has come with a re-creative rapture upon the great themes of the major poets: God, country, nature, the sea, love and war, the strife of spirit and flesh, the fugitive Beauty, the pursuing Soul, the Hunger unappeasable.

Literature is not for him, as it is for many of his Irish contemporaries, an "escape from life." It is the exultant hymning and glorification of life. He exults in the tang and taste of his own days, sweet and bitter; and he has known both bitter and sweet. In early years, labouring in quarry and mill, tramping long roads in the rain, acquainted with peasant and sailor in tavern and slum, sailing before the mast in many ships, he felt the thrill of danger, the bite of poverty, the sweat of toil—yet everywhere he heard music rising and growing more distinct. As he followed the oxen in the fields, he heard the lark singing above the green wheat. The sails sang to him on many a starry night, treading the deck on the "windy, green, unquiet sea." And then in a room above the slums of London, he read and wrote and talked with young poets and dreamers till the gray-eyed dawn came in; and history sang to him, and the old poets, and the deep rich friendship of men.

So first he tuned his harp, and struck up his songs of the open road and his salt-water chants in a rollicking ballad measure. In the earlier time there was much mirth and jest in him and a boyish fancy for buccaneers and golden galleons. But deeper than this, as *The Everlasting Mercy* and *The Widow in the Bye Street* witnessed, was a quick experienced compassion for "the dust and scum of the earth." With broadening culture and the instruction of chivalric love his theme has widened and taken wings. In narrative verse and novel, in peasant tragedy and historical drama, in haunting lyric and elegy, in the noble prose of *Gallipoli*, he has brooded with increasing intensity upon the flame of heroism and splendour that between birth and oblivion irradiates our handful of dust.

In these later years, since the war, he has turned with a kind of passionate homesickness to new songs of old English things—the down lands, the fox-hunt, the steeple-chase. He returns to the blithe familiar scenes, sweet with the morning scent of dew-drenched brier roses, and salutes them blithely yet with a catch in the throat, like a man whose love is quickened to the verge of tears by mournful memories and the sharpness of death. For, poet in action as in speech, when the brazen trumpets of 1914 sounded, following the Red Cross to one of the bloodiest fields of the war he

> sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,
> And so by ship to sea; and knew no more
> The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,
> Nor the dear outline of the English shore.
>
> But knew the misery of the soaking trench,
> The freezing in the rigging, the despair
> In the revolting second of the wrench
> When the blind soul is flung upon the air.

GEORGE MEREDITH

A keen-eyed passionate sage of antique symmetry of body, mind, and spirit, George Meredith has gone before us into the world of light. Yet still for the imagination his bright shade haunts the English Maytime. Just ahead there, he breasts a green hilltop, he faces the morning, and, his feet dabbled in dew, his pulses leaping with a lyric beat, he pursues his quest of some mysterious "harp-like laughter" heard in the dawn of life. Too eager to wait for slow-paced followers, he presses through the many-coloured daybreak towards the white radiance beyond, scattering as he goes fragments from the Pilgrim's Scrip and broken snatches of melody. How can he stop to heed us, panting to the rearward, while far away before him the eternal Graces, Youth and Health and Beauty, are dancing rosy-footed in the light?

George Meredith is a difficult and tantalizing poet, a subtle and ingenious novelist, and a constructive critic. Above all, he is an impassioned sage with unwavering faith in the wisdom of his joy. He rejoices in Nature and the life of healthy senses as a good in itself. He rejoices in the freedom and activity of the mind as likewise a good in itself. He rejoices in a third good which he recognizes as a kind of selfless nobility of spirit. All these joys he pronounces very good; but the best joy of all is an exulting harmony of life's three great harp strings sounding together.

The rhapsodist and the sage in Meredith, a little jealous of the representing artist, scorned the subjects, methods, and aims of mid-nineteenth century realists, domestic and foreign. A realist, but no haunter of slums and hospitals, a learned humanist but no cynic, an ardent liberal yet an intellectual aristocrat, he never cared to flatter or to offend the multitude by indiscriminate reproductions of its face. His theme is civilization and

his special field is highly civilized society. Like Browning he requires *dramatis personæ* who are at "concert pitch." No "slice of life" for him but a prepared stage—preferably some hospitable, park-flanked country mansion, within hail of the thrush and the nightingale, with a select assemblage, well-born, well-bred, high-spirited, conscious of brains and beauty, capable of epigram and allusion, capable of subtle and intoxicating charm, disciplined to suppress the grosser evidences of simian ancestry, yet still infested, like society at lower levels, with pride, obstinacy, egotism, and the sensual roots. How the finest and the fairest of our species sustain the elemental stresses—this is the business of the plot and the subject of the commentary.

The reader who looks in *The Egoist* or *Diana of the Crossways* for a story and nothing else quickly finds much more than he asks for, and, fretting under the novelist's indefatigable criticism of life, is likely to underrate his creative faculty. Perhaps his critical idea of comedy, divulged in his famous essay and illustrated by his works, is his most valuable contribution to fiction. Yet it is astonishing what an amount of blood remains in his characters, what vitality in Sir Austin Feverel and Sir Willoughby Patterne, after they have been pierced through and through by the sword of the Comic Spirit. And as for the high-mettled young men and desirable women whom Meredith's creative love has brought forth, particularly the young women, from Lucy Desborough to Diana and Clara Middleton—they endure with marvellous freshness the siege of years. They are likely to remain, like some of the figures of the Greek sculptors, as records of a joyous vision beyond the average compass of art or the careless workmanship of life.

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT
S S
MDCCCCXXII

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

Sir Henry Newbolt is a distinguished member of the Victorian Old Guard. An Oxford graduate, a barrister by profession, he is by instinct and conviction a patriot and a believer in the British Empire. He would have made an excellent Poet Laureate; for the thought of the State moves him to a passionate and unquestioning loyalty. It is clear to him that an Englishman who dies fighting in South Africa or in Afghanistan or Egypt is in a condition of blessedness and has gone to his God like a soldier. The beneficent and just will of the great Motherland gathers up the wills of all her faithful children and unites them and sanctifies them. His most exultant note is heard when he summons young men to take up the sword of their fathers and strike for England, freely offering all for her glory:

> I know what I have loved, I see again
> Beneath the beauty of life perishing
> That which transfigures, that which makes the world
> Of life enduring.
>
> If there must be death
> Let it be mine! If there must be defeat
> Let it be mine, my Country, and not thine!

Born in 1862, Sir Henry Newbolt practised law till 1899, and then at the high tide of imperialistic fervour in the time of the Boer War, turned mainly to literature. His poetic labours for the Army and Navy supplement Mr. Kipling's chants in honour of Tommy Atkins. His great heroes are Drake, Blake, and Nelson; and his most famous song is perhaps *Drake's Drum*. His *Poems: New and Old* contain a spirited commemoration of England's sea-fights down to the destruction of the *Emden*. During the

late war he collected and published its heroic tales, and in 1921 he published a *Naval History of the War*.

As a man of letters his inspiring motives are the perpetuation of English chivalry and the defence of English poetry as the expression of the heroic national spirit. His professorial lectures before the Royal Society of Literature, collected under the title, *A New Study of English Poetry*, are chiefly interesting for their attempt to assimilate the critical doctrines of Benedetto Croce.

Like his friend Mr. Edmund Gosse, Sir Henry Newbolt is somewhat skeptical of the latest experiments of the literary Futurists; he clings religiously to Chaucer and Shakespeare; he admires the work of his contemporaries Robert Bridges and Laurence Binyon; but he is anxious to have it understood that he has a welcome for good new men, when they arrive. And as for those who complain that his generation has produced no great poet, he likens them to "a blind horse that starves knee-deep in corn."

1922

GEORGE RUSSELL

(A.E.)

The Irish Socrates, affable, bespectacled, unkempt, he talks and dreams and toils in the Dublin market-place to persuade the young men to raise above the thatched roof of a peasant nation a Parthenon not made with hands, august and splendid, visible in Heaven as the aspiration of a united people towards wisdom, justice, and beauty. Perhaps the most interesting personality of Young Ireland, he expresses through a multiplicity of activities a unity of spirit which is the bond of peace among many bitter factions. Other leaders may equal or surpass him at various points—in courtliness of manner, in poetic talent, in the tactics of organization; he is peerless in sweetness and nobility of character. In a period of intense jealousies and mortal enmities, no man speaks ill of "A.E.": even the malice of George Moore, which spares no sex nor age, cooes like a dove in his presence; and young poets and politicians consult him as a kind of oracle.

Expert in the material and adept in the spiritual realm, he is prepared, like Numa returning from a conference with Egeria, to discuss every aspect of the national being, with all conditions of men. With farmers he talks of the price of eggs and butter and the labourer's wage; and Young Ireland doubtless knows him most widely as an agricultural economist, editor of its ablest journal, and tireless propagator of Sir Horace Plunkett's principles of rural coöperation, which he regards as the great "turning movement of humanity heavenwards." With poets he speaks of the "torch of vision" and of glimpses he has had of the Shining Ones in hours of rapture among the hills. But he is also, like Blake, a painter of his visions, and his walls are hung with Irish landscapes from which emerge figures of the divine guardians of the land. To alien eyes Ireland

may seem a "penny-dreadful nationality"; to him not Ireland alone but all the earth is holy ground transfigured by light from above the sky, from beyond the sun. And so, with mystics he talks of Plotinus and Swedenborg and Emerson and Whitman; and with statesmen he speaks of the holy lands of Egypt and Chaldea and India and Greece. All his activities centre and unite in a philosophic passion to externalize his dream, to create within the boundaries of the political state a spiritual organism which shall transcend these boundaries, a hitherto inexistent democracy which shall express the souls and characters of a hitherto inexistent people.

A.E.'s poetry is difficult even for the initiated. His prose is full of his essential poetic virtue and at the same time is of an admirable lucidity. His animating wisdom and nobility of feeling are most powerfully exhibited in a Platonic symposium *Interpreters*, a book conceived and written in a profound meditative rapture engendered by the shadow of the sword. Under the hovering air-ships of a hostile world-state, in a prison fitfully lighted by explosions in a devastated city, the participants in the symposium meet and discuss what relation the politics of Time bear to the politics of Eternity, each one, according to his nature, tracing the origin of his conception of the State behind the open argument to the spiritual mood which is "the true decider of destiny." Of the quality of the dialogue, this will serve as a specimen:

> "I count it as noble to fight God's battles as to keep His peace."
>
> "I do not think any one can lose what is his own save by descent from the sphere where the things loved have their natural life."

GEORGE
BERNARD SHAW
H-S
FEC

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

A totally abstemious Silenus, a very virtuous and high-browed satyr, a Puritan treading the comic stage, a playfully mischievous Grand Inquisitor, Mephistopheles on a holiday in Heaven—with such phrases you may pelt this elderly Anglo-Irish iconoclast till your eyelids cease to wag. You will not budge him a jot. Hard, sinewy, alert, asking no pleasure but the feast in his own mind, free from all petty vices of our animal nature, with superhuman confidence in his own wits, George Bernard Shaw is a resolute radical, so dangerous and so amusing that he has kept the world for the last thirty years in a titter of merriment and anxiety.

"Like the Venus de Milo, he is admirable, what there is of him," says Mr. Chesterton, intimating that a good half of human nature—its emotions, prejudices, passions, and instincts—was omitted from his composition. In the *lumine sicco*, the dry light, generated by his preponderant brain, conduct animated by non-rational motives appears absurd and the subject of mocking laughter. Since history has been largely governed by non-rational motives, most of the pages of human history, down to and including the Victorian Age appeal to him as comic. He himself was the first Englishman of normal vision. Samuel Butler was his prophet. Ibsen and Nietzsche were his *aides-de-camp*.

Mr. Shaw came into English letters riding on his ideas of economic absurdity, with a train of pack-mules following behind: the absurdity of war, the absurdity of patriotism, the absurdity of idealism, the absurdity of sentiment, the absurdity of Cæsar and Napoleon, the absurdity of Shakespeare, the absurdity of modern marriage, the absurdity of doctors, the absurdity of dukes, the absurdity of parents, the absurdity of pretty much the entire structure of our "civilization." He taught as the first

axiom of his revolutionary philosophy that the end of reverence is the beginning of wisdom; and as the second, that children should disobey their parents. With these levers he has industriously pried at the underpinning of the Age of Victoria.

A humourless fanatic equipped with Mr. Shaw's ideas might be a disagreeable and perhaps dangerously disturbing figure in the community. But Mr. Shaw has always released his brood of "heresies" with an enigmatic upward curl at the corners of his mouth and with hieroglyphic signals at the corners of his eyes which warn the spectators at his "theatre of ideas" to be wary. It is not easy to pick his hero. Will it be the master of the house or his butler? He sternly refuses to solicit our "sympathies" for any of his marionettes—that would be a breach of the Shavian discipline. He gives us, indeed, dissertations upon them; but the only real help that he supplies is contained in the injunction: "Watch them, as I am doing; and use your brains, use your brains."

JAMES
STEPHENS
1913
TSS
FEC

JAMES STEPHENS

James Stephens is a lover of Cathleen ni Houlihan and all her ancient lore. There is modern evidence to prove that intercourse with fairies is perilous to the wits of a certain sort of man; the little people get him and take him to their elfin grot and feed him on honey-dew and the milk of Paradise—and then turn him adrift to wander "alone and palely loitering," weaned from all sympathy with the homely ways of human folk. They don't catch James Stephens that way; he catches them and turns them over, squirming, to the children whom he gathers around him in the twilight, made safe by the glow of the friendly fire-light, to hear his tales of maledictive gray old women, and the six clans of the little green men, and the quest for the crock of gold.

One of the most lovable and sympathetic figures among the younger imaginative writers of Ireland, James Stephens possesses a spell, or a number of spells, which preserve him from the malice of fairyland and from a merely futile dalliance in elfin grots. He possesses abundant humour, quaint, droll, and tender; he loves real earth and sunlight and the song of birds; he has a heart as well as an imagination; he likes people and he understands their workaday lives as well as their dreams. He can enter into the girlish visions of Mary Makebelieve, who, in the dingy fifth-story room of a Dublin tenement, dreams of a young man coming to claim her, "standing on the prow of a swift ship with the sunlight blazing back from his golden armour." But he has also crawled on his hands and knees behind the scrubbing charwoman, Mary's mother, and has earned her pittance of a shilling-and-sixpence, and has felt her rheumatism and sciatica, and has throbbed with her maternal jealousy and her maternal love and pride.

There is nothing common, nothing vulgar, after love has transfigured it. "The discovery that men are comedians, liars, and egotists," says Stephens, will not wean a true woman from motherliness, pity, self-sacrifice. This lore he learned at the knees of Cathleen ni Houlihan. This spirit makes his *Mary, Mary* a story of adorable beauty. It permeates his work as his special quality, and distinguishes it from work inspired only by the unearthly and estranging element of the Celtic genius. His poetry and tales, like *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, bear a message to an impoverished, pain-stricken, and quarrelsome world. They go gently preaching that all persons and all things are brothers and sisters and that they are living and dying in distress; and that gaiety and goodness and kindness are, perhaps, beyond wisdom.

HUGH WALPOLE
S.S.I.
AD1922

HUGH WALPOLE

Hugh Walpole is an English novelist who has made brilliant manœuvres to escape the reputation of being "a belated Trollope." The *data* of Trollope were in his easy possession. The son of a bishop, bred in a cathedral town, member of a distinguished family whose umbrageous branches spread over half the shires in England, he inherited a vision of a venerable ecclesiastical and social order which the more conservative Victorians accepted as they accepted nature and the order of the universe. As a novelist, he himself recognizes clearly the high artistic interest and value of firm social stratification and those typical characters which come out of a definite fixed environment.

In a considerable group of his novels—*The Duchess of Wrexe*, *The Green Mirror*, *The Captives*, *The Cathedral*—he has exhibited with æsthetic gusto the intricate network of family and property relationships, the subtle octopus grip of immemorial customs and unwritten laws, the operation of the sundering sword of religious belief and religious acquiescence, and the powerful controlling hands of the male and female chiefs of the elder generation, all conspiring visibly and invisibly to keep England cosy, safe, and comfortable for all who have inherited comfort, safety, and cosiness—for all old heads of families and for "those associated together with them in authority." As an artist, Mr. Walpole loves and paints with imaginative power a four-square burgess, a deeply-encrusted old Tory scholar, an immitigable divine, an unvanquishable duchess tenaciously operating the strings of destiny from the verge of the tomb.

But Mr. Walpole has attained, by a number of processes, a point of view quite detached from that of the eldest generation of his sitters. In his apprentice days he sat, for example, at the feet of Henry James; and he

learned from him something of the great secret of serene æsthetic contemplation of the entire human spectacle—an æsthetic contemplation which welcomes change, variety, contrast, adventurous experience, as so much more material for discrimination. Furthermore, an unusually deep immersion in Russian fiction, followed by service with the Red Cross on the Russian front and residence in Petrograd, provided him with a new frame and a new window through which to envisage the tea-tables and drawing-rooms which Jane Austen had taught him were immutable, though amusing. One may even conjecture that the pains he has taken to acquaint himself with life and literature in America have been in some degree enlarging. At any rate, he came through the enthusiasms and disillusions of the war with something a little more than a mere speculative artist's interest in that vague world-striving which we call democracy, when we can think of no more precise word; and, above all, he came through with something more than an artist's sympathy for the manifested craving of youth, "the young enchanted," to captain its own adventure on roads not certified to lead to the ancestral farms and firesides.

In his treatment of brutal and elemental passion in *Fortitude* and in his tragi-comic handling of the suffocating provincial English situation in *The Gods and Mr. Perrin*, one sees him grappling with the unmoulded lava-flow of life. But the work in which he notably brings a fresh current of impressions to play over the materials of English fiction is his group of novels presenting Russian life through English eyes or English life through eyes experienced in Russian ways. *The Green Mirror* illustrates the last situation; *The Dark Forest* and *The Secret City* illustrate the first. Take the reflected impression, says the novelist, for what it is worth. Its value—and its value is highly worth discovering—depends upon that general and profound stirring of the imagination which takes place when what the late Poet Laureate called "haunts of ancient peace" are disturbed by the eruption of a mysterious, vast, and unconsidered power.

TSG
FEC
A·D
1921
H·G
WELLS

H. G. WELLS

A magnified and glorified middle-class Englishman, the most widely known writer of his times, essentially a super-journalist but passing also as prophet, sociologist, publicist, world-historian, and foremost novelist of his day, H. G. Wells has exercised and is still exercising an enormous influence upon his contemporaries. His specific convictions and proposals in regard to the reformation of the world have changed so steadily from year to year that he cannot be said to stand very definitely for any program. Socialism, aristocracy, and Wilsonian democracy have, for example, each in turn, received his sanguine embrace. He has been constant only in a profound indifference to custom and tradition and in his bland confidence in science and the speculative reason.

His general influence, accordingly, is dissolvent. A modern Rousseau, he is first of all concerned with breaking up the "old order," which he has arraigned as priggish, prudish, dingy, furtive, canting, humbugging, and bungling. The words with which he allures the hopes of the young and eager are scientific method, research, eugenics, feminism, socialism, coöperation, publicity, constructive statesmanship, efficiency, and passionate love. In scientific romances and Utopian novels he peers into a reconstructed world operated by a revised human nature, against which he, like the author of *The Social Contract* would be prompt to revolt.

His influence upon writers of "realistic" fiction in England and America is immense. He is chiefly responsible for the creation or revival of a form of disguised autobiography in which the author may annually seize upon some episode of his life during the preceding year, saturate it with contemporary colour and reference, and serve it up as a novel. In the field of realistic fiction Mr. Wells reminds one of the peerless *maître de cuisine* in

The Fortunes of Nigel who made out of the hind quarter of one salted horse "forty-five couverts" so adroitly concocted that none of his guests could tell "what the devil any one of them were made upon at all."

The main recipe of our suave modern *chef* may, however, be expressed thus: "Take equal parts of science, sex, and sociology. Mix thoroughly. Serve hot." A skeletonized novel prepared according to this tremendously popular formula reads about as follows:

"On completion of my course at the Royal College of Science, I had intended to carry on extensive investigation in embryology; but after some hectic years of experimentation and hunger I found myself comfortably established as chief chemist to a manufacturing company organized to supply powdered soup to South America and Mexico. . . . In early middle life I discovered that I had permanently attached myself by marriage to a good woman with a sallow complexion who made no adequate responses to my nature. . . . As I passed from my office at a little after twelve o'clock on the third of April 192—, my glance fell upon a belated typist bending over her instrument. The down at the nape of her neck was like the soft fluff on a newly hatched chick. . . . Suddenly we found ourselves in one another's arms. . . . Never before had I known the quality of passionate kisses. . . . That evening, as I lifted the latch of my garden gate, it came upon me in a flash of illumination that I should have to reconstruct from the bottom my entire universe. . . . At midnight, sitting still at my desk, my head buried in my arms, half-listening to the nightingales in the lime tree, I knew that thenceforth my life work was to be the application of science to the creation of a human society more clearly answerable to the heart's desire."

W.B.
YEATS

W. B. YEATS

When Yeats rises, tall and pallid, and tossing his iron-gray mane, closes his eyes and chants in an infinitely dreary far-away monotone of the Danaan folk and the Isle of Innisfrae, of the golden apples of the sun and the silver apples of the moon, of cloths for his beloved woven of light and the half light, of Deirdre and Queen Maeve, of the wanderings of Oisin and the secret rose, he seems all poet yet a poet in whose veins a mixture of blue starlight and rose-water has been substituted for blood. He seems less a poet than a lonely disembodied voice, once a man but exiled for contempt of his kind, metamorphosed into a white sea-bird, and condemned to wander forever wistfully crying over foaming dark rocks of a wave-smitten coast. Such is the wan chief glory of contemporary Irish poetry.

When, after his apparition in his poetical character, Mr. Yeats seats himself at the centre of a circle of friendly and sufficiently reverent listeners, he returns marvellously to humanity, and assumes a character of which his humourless and unearthly poems and dramas give hardly a hint. He becomes the sagacious, inspiring, and indefatigable organizer of the Irish literary renaissance; founder and director of the Abbey Theatre; companion and collaborator with Synge, Lady Gregory, A. E., John Eglinton, George Moore; discoverer and counsellor of a multitude of younger writers—a great literary leader, a richly experienced man-of-letters, a brilliant raconteur, brimming with humour and abounding in delightfully malicious anecdote.

To Mr. Yeats, the man, reality seems adequately amusing and rewarding. Why does he so rigorously divorce it from his verse? The immaculate conception of poetry, traditional among the Irish, he accepts with

Celtic inertia, and elevates it to the position of a principle of literary conscience, a theory of art.

As an apprentice in letters, Mr. Yeats went to London with a pack of Irish fairy-tales upon his back. He fell in with a group of young men—Wilde, Symons, Dowson, Beardsley, Lionel Johnson, *et al.*—most of whom died young of life's fitful fever. Concerning the personal lives of many of these men there are rumours of drink, drugs, disease, the garret, the gutter, and strange forms of sin. But the imaginations of them all dwelt in ivory towers. They were all possessed by one high passion—the love of art. They all practised one redeeming virtue—exquisite workmanship. In this brotherhood, of which he is almost the sole survivor, the young Yeats learned to speak of reality as a boresome irrelevance, and of politics and morals and patriotism and war as bourgeois intruders upon the intense sanctity of the Imagination, which as Blake and the mystics taught him, lives forever. His English training reinforced his native Irish disposition to sing high and aloof.

As an accomplished weaver of dream-tapestry, Mr. Yeats returned to Dublin, bearing the message that the way of salvation for Irish letters lies through the soul of the peasant, who, while he drudges in bog and mire, dreams that he has been kissed by three white-armed queens of fairyland. As John Synge was soon to make Christy Mahon remark, the peasant in reality is "a dirty man—God forgive him." And Mr. Yeats, who is himself the quintessence of fastidiousness, has never perhaps attempted to envisage the peasant as he really is. He has not cared in his own work to effect a substantial union of actuality and ideality, and to present himself whole. He has preferred rather to attenuate himself by fasting in the ivory tower. He has preferred to send his spirit searching for immortality as a mere silvery emanation, beautiful but empty-handed and lost in a revery on the beauty of its hands. Encountering him, one fancies that the hungry soul of the Irish peasant

exclaims impatiently: "Stay me with apples, for I am sick of love."
And he replies:

> I have spread my dreams under your feet;
> Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

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